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General Assembly
Tenth emergency special session
Agenda item 5
Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory

Security Council
Seventy-third year

Identical letters dated 30 March 2018 from the Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Security Council

I write to bring to your urgent and immediate attention the dangerous situation unfolding on the ground in the Occupied State of Palestine, including East Jerusalem, due to the escalation of Israel's latest campaign of military aggression and attacks against the civilian population. In particular, the occupying Power has intensified its onslaught against the besieged Gaza Strip in serious breach of international law, including international humanitarian law and the relevant provisions regarding the protection of civilians in armed conflict.

As we write this letter, at least 15 Palestinian civilians have been killed, and more than 1,400 have been injured, many of them seriously. The intensification of Israel's aggression in the Gaza Strip threatens to further destabilize the situation on the ground and to fully ignite yet another round of deadly violence by Israel. This demands the attention of the international community, particularly the Security Council, which is duty-bound to take action to maintain international peace and security. This also means that our repeated request for the international protection of our people should be met immediately in order to avert more bloodshed and to save innocent Palestinian lives.

The majority of the Palestinian civilians who have tragically been killed in the Gaza Strip were killed while they were taking part in a peaceful, non-violent demonstration to mark the forty-second annual Palestine Land Day, on which occasion, in 1976, six Palestinians were killed during protests against Israel's illegal expropriation of thousands of dunums of Palestinian land. In fact, today's protests, which are aimed at reiterating the right of return of Palestinian refugees, are meant to kick off six weeks of peaceful protests leading up to the commemoration of the Nakbah on 15 May 2018. This year's commemoration of the Nakbah will solemnly observe the passage of 70 years since more than 800,000 Palestinians, 70 per cent of our people at that time, were forcibly uprooted and expelled from their homes and lands or fled in fear for their lives after brutal massacres had been carried out in over

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400 Palestinian towns and villages in a clear act of ethnic cleansing by Zionist terrorist groups in Mandate Palestine.

The names of some of the Palestinians tragically killed are: Mohammed Najjar (age 25); Mahmoud Muammar (age 38); Mohammed Abu Omar (age 22); Ahmed Oudeh (age 19); Jihad Freneh (age 33); Mahmoud Saadi Rahmi (age 33); Abdelfattah Abdelnabi (age 22); Ibrahim Abu Shaar (age 20); as well as Iyad Abdelal, Abdelqader al-Hawajiri, Sari Abu Odeh, Hamdan Abu Amsheh, Jihad Abu Jamous, Bader al-Sabbagh and Naji Abu Hjai, whose ages remain unknown. Earlier on Friday, Omar Waheed Abu Samour, a farmer from the Gaza Strip, was also killed by Israeli artillery fire while standing on his land near Khan Yunis, just hours ahead of the peaceful and non-violent demonstrations.

It must be highlighted that Israel, the occupying Power, has been preparing the ground for attacks against disarmed and unprotected Palestinian civilians peacefully protesting during Palestine Land Day through inciting provocative and violent rhetoric by Israeli officials. Such incitement even led to statements being made by human rights organizations, such as Amnesty International, which issued a warning yesterday calling on the Israeli occupying forces to "refrain from using excessive force" following reports that they had deployed more than 100 snipers with orders to shoot anyone who breached the wall between Israel and Gaza. In addition to the snipers, the occupying forces sent armoured vehicles, sniffer and attack dogs, as well as hundreds of other forces equipped with all sorts of lethal ammunition to use as they pleased, without regard for Palestinian lives in the Gaza Strip. It should be recalled that the 2 million Palestinian civilians in Gaza, 70 per cent of whom are registered refugees, have already suffered immeasurably from Israel's 10-year blockade, which has led to a dire socioeconomic and humanitarian crisis.

It is more than clear, in word and deed, that the latest incitement by Israeli officials and the barbaric violence of the Israeli occupying forces against the rights and lives of the Palestinian people have little to do with Israel's so-called security and everything to do with the country's continuing its stranglehold on the lives of every Palestinian man, woman and child living under its brutal occupation. It should be stated that the occupying Power will never succeed by continuing to violently silence all Palestinian non-violent actions that are against the systematic dehumanization of the Palestinian people and the denial of their inalienable rights. The people will continue to fight for their rights, including their rights to be free from occupation and to live in peace and security and with dignity.

Tragically, as we witness the events of today, wherein tens of thousands of Palestinians are marching peacefully throughout the Occupied State of Palestine, including East Jerusalem, as well as in Israel and the diaspora, we are reminded that the Nakbah did not end in 1948 but continues to this day. In this connection, it is beyond tragic that millions of Palestinians continue either to live in exile as refugees, denied the inalienable right to return to their homes, or to live under Israel's half-century-long belligerent military occupation of the State of Palestine, including East Jerusalem, where they are forced to endure the constant violation of their fundamental human rights, including Israel's ongoing theft of Palestinian land for illegal settlements, its destruction of Palestinian homes and agricultural land and its revocation of residency rights, deportations and recurring brutal military assaults that have resulted in mass civilian casualties, such as the ones that took place in Gaza in 2008, 2009, 2012 and 2014, as well as the denial of the internationally recognized legal right of return of millions of stateless Palestinian refugees.

We call upon the international community unequivocally to condemn Israel's criminal and illegal actions in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, especially in the Gaza Strip. We reiterate our call to the international community, particularly the

Security Council, to uphold its responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security and to bring an immediate end to the occupying Power's military aggression. Israel must be held fully accountable for all its crimes, including today's killing of innocent Palestinian civilians, in accordance with international law and the principles of justice. With the high number of deaths today, we once again call upon the international community, particularly the Security Council, to act now to provide protection to the Palestinian people and to defuse this volatile situation, which clearly constitutes a threat to international peace and security. As we have stated in the past, the Palestinian people cannot remain the exception to the international commitments and obligations under international law, including the obligation to protect civilians from atrocities and grave breaches.

This letter is in follow-up to our 627 previous letters regarding the ongoing crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, which constitutes the territory of the State of Palestine. Those letters, dated from 29 September 2000 (A/55/432-S/2000/921) to 6 March 2018 (A/ES-10/772-S/2018/195) constitute a basic record of the crimes being committed by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people since September 2000. For all of these war crimes, acts of State terrorism and systematic human rights violations being committed against the Palestinian people, Israel, the occupying Power, must be held accountable and the perpetrators brought to justice.

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the text of the present letter distributed as a document of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 5, and of the Security Council, and made available to the members of the Council for their immediate and valuable consideration.

(*Signed*) Riyad **Mansour**
Ambassador
Permanent Observer of the
State of Palestine to the United Nations